ISSN 0712-7774

$3.50CANADA • $2.25USA • £1.50UK

CEREBUS

LATTER DAYS 30

295
OCT

Endings III

Well, as it turns out, *Cerebus* 292 *didn't* make it into the stores with two days to spare, as I wrote last issue. It actually arrived the following Wednesday, making it five days late for the July cover date. I'm writing this on Labour Day and, as it stands now, issue 293 has shipped. The freebies and subscription copies got to Pak-Mail last Tuesday, so it's still possible that some subscribers and some people on the comp list got 293 during the cover-dated month of August if they're in Southern Ontario, upstate New York or eastern Michigan. We might have had a chance of the issue itself arriving in stores during August if it hadn't been for the massive blackout on 14 August which delayed almost everything in the normal sequence of events.

We're still having trouble gauging when to send the freebies and subscription copies relative to the arrival date in stores. It used to be that the length of time it took for the copies to get to their destinations was about the same as the length of time it took the copies to get to the various distribution warehouses and, from there, to the stores. That was before Diamond decided to centralize its shipping in the Memphis "hub," thus adding another stop on the way to the stores. Ger started monitoring the Yahoo. Com Cerebus newsgroup and found that there's about a two-week gap between the time that the subscribers were getting their copies and when the latest issue is arriving in the stores. Ideally, we'd like the subscribers to be getting their copies before the stores do (they are, after all, paying a premium rate of $3.75 per issue, as compared with the Canadian cover price of $3.50), but a few *days*—not two *weeks*—before. As an experiment, we've held the subscriber copies for a week to try to narrow the gap in arrival times, but a lot depends on what the volume of material going through Diamond is like and when our shipment is arriving in Memphis. If everything falls the right way, the odds are good that an issue that left Preney on, say, a Tuesday could be in the stores the following Wednesday. In which case, holding onto the subscription copies for a week would mean that the subscribers would be getting their copies several days *after* they are in the stores.

294, with a cover date of September, I have already given the "go-ahead" to be printed based on the blue lines, so theoretically it has the best chance of being the first "on time" issue since 287. In the bigger picture, I am working on my part of page 7 of issue 296 today, which puts me at six pages for this week (the minimum number of pages-per-week needed to complete the 300 issues on schedule). Our respective EDC's (Estimated Dates of Completion) are: (as of today 1 September) (94 pages to go) 17 December for me and (as of 26 August, the last day he was in) (105 pages to go) 24 December for Ger. Mine slipped one day from December 16 when I had a five-page week (needing one full day to complete the annotations for the back of *Latter Days*—as far as I know, the last major impediment between here and issue 300 apart from signing x number of copies of the first "signature" in *Latter Days* which should take a few hours at the most). Ger has backed his date up from 27 December.

As I said to Gerhard, the interesting thing now is that each time we complete an issue, that's one less issue that we can screw up on. Being a week late getting the book into the stores with six issues to go is infinitely preferable to being two weeks late with nine issues to go. Ger mentioned that we *should* be able to finish at the end of January and still have the book in the stores in March. Theoretically, yes. For years that was how things worked, but the entire system has eroded the closer we have gotten to issue 300, the turnaround time on the typesetting, the length of time until the blue-lines come in, the gap between the arrival of the blue lines and the sample printed copy, the gap between authorizing shipping and when the books ship, the gap between shipping and arrival at Diamond, the gap between arrival at Diamond and shipping to the stores.

Why is that the case? Beats hell out of me. Come March, 2004 it won't be my problem any more.

I'll be retired.

CEREBUS

NO. 295 OCTOBER 2003

DAVE SIM
Creator, Writer
Characters
(interior art & cover)
pencil & ink,
mechanical tones,
lettering

GERHARD
Background Artist
Cover Artist
pencil & ink
Cover Technician

LATTER DAYS

•

PROLOGUE
(Cerebus 266
and 267)

•

BOOK ONE
(Cerebus 268 to
288)

•

BOOK TWO
(Cerebus 289 to
300)

PUBLISHED MONTHLY BY
AARDVARK-VANAHEIM INC.
P.O. BOX 1674, STATION C
KITCHENER, ON N2G 4R2

ALL CONTENTS ©2003
DAVE SIM AND GERHARD

PRINTED IN CANADA BY
PRENEY PRINT & LITHO INC.
WINDSOR, ONTARIO

AND **THEN**, HE SAID THE **ONLY WAY** *La SANCTUAIRE* WOULD **CONSIDER** LIFTING ITS VETO WAS IF HE HIMSELF WAS ALLOWED TO BE *Le PETITE CHAPERON ROUGE* AT YOUR MEETING WITH YOUR SON.

"COMPRIS? ZAT I MOSS BE EEN ZE RUHM WEEZ ZAM...

OKAY. **LOSE** THE ACCENT OR CEREBUS **WILL** THROW UP!

"I MUST BE IN THE ROOM *WITH* THEM. *AT. ALL TIMES.* TO ENSURE THAT THE FATHER DOES NOT PERFORM THE -- HOW YOU SAY? *SEDUCTION* UPON THE SON."

"*Le TAMPON EFFRAYANT* (THE SCARY TAMPON) MUST NEVER GIVE BIRTH TO *La MÈRE PLUS NOUVEAU!* (THE NEW, IMPROVED MOTHER)"

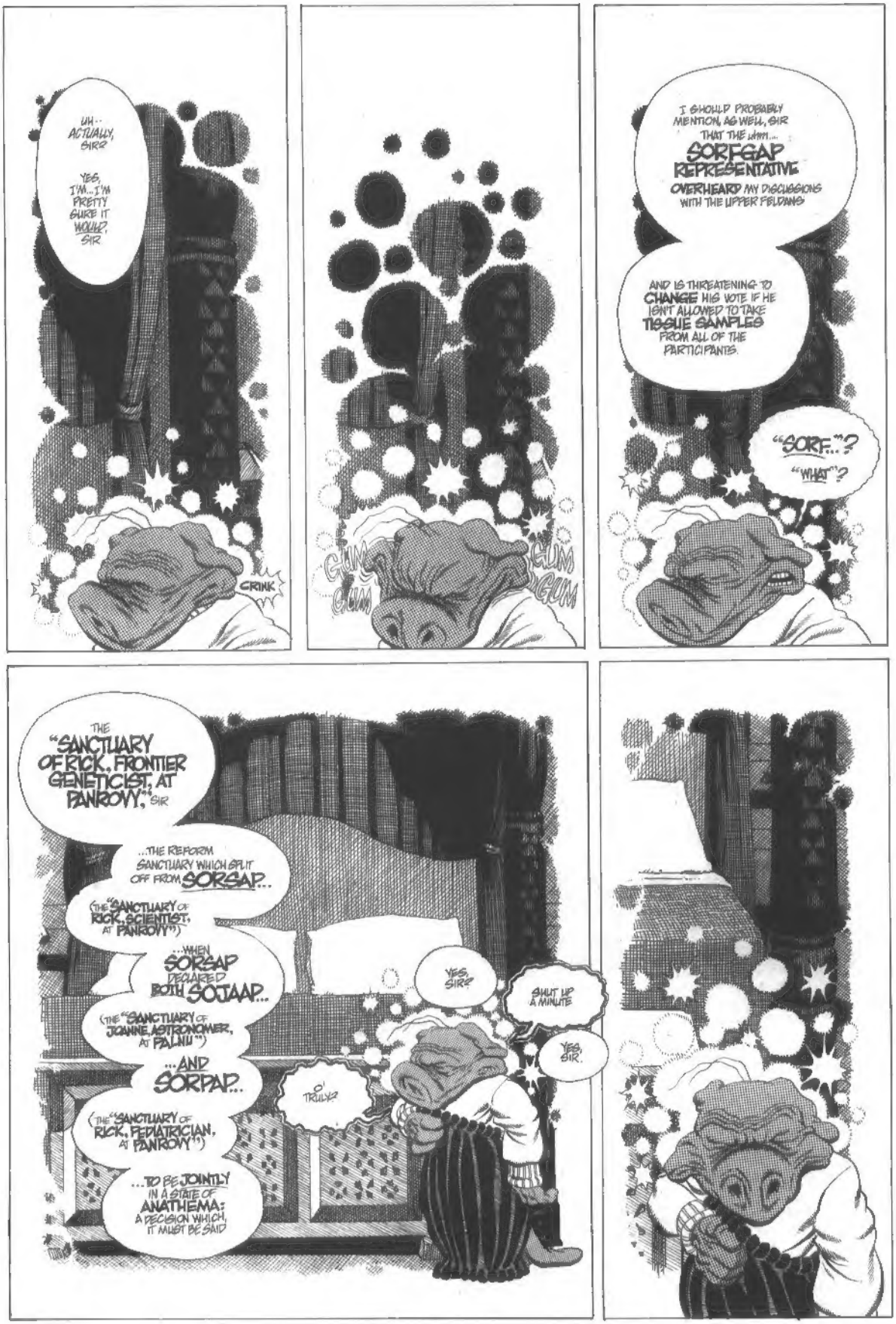
WHY NOT?

IT **SEEMS**, SIR, THAT **ONE** OF THE **BELIEFS** OF *La SANCTUAIRE*

WAIT A MINUTE! WAIT A MINUTE! WHATEVER THIS "**BELIEF**" *IS*... **IS IT GOING TO MAKE CEREBUS WANT TO PUKE?**

CRINK!

CRINK


UH-- ACTUALLY, SIR?
YES, I'M... I'M PRETTY SURE IT WOULD, SIR
CRINK
GUM GUM GUM GUM
I SHOULD PROBABLY MENTION, AS WELL, SIR THAT THE WHM... SORFGAP REPRESENTATIVE OVERHEARD MY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE UPPER FELDANS
AND IS THREATENING TO CHANGE HIS VOTE IF HE ISN'T ALLOWED TO TAKE TISSUE SAMPLES FROM ALL OF THE PARTICIPANTS.
"SORF..."?
"WHAT"?
THE "SANCTUARY OF RICK, FRONTIER GENETICIST, AT PANROVY," SIR
...THE REFORM SANCTUARY WHICH SPLIT OFF FROM SORSAP...
(THE "SANCTUARY OF RICK, SCIENTIST, AT PANROVY")
...WHEN SORSAP DECLARED BOTH SOJAAP...
(THE "SANCTUARY OF JOANNE, ASTRONOMER, AT PALNU")
...AND SORPAP...
(THE "SANCTUARY OF RICK, PEDIATRICIAN, AT PANROVY")
...TO BE JOINTLY IN A STATE OF ANATHEMA: A DECISION WHICH, IT MUST BE SAID
O' TRULY?
YES, SIR?
SHUT UP A MINUTE
YES, SIR.

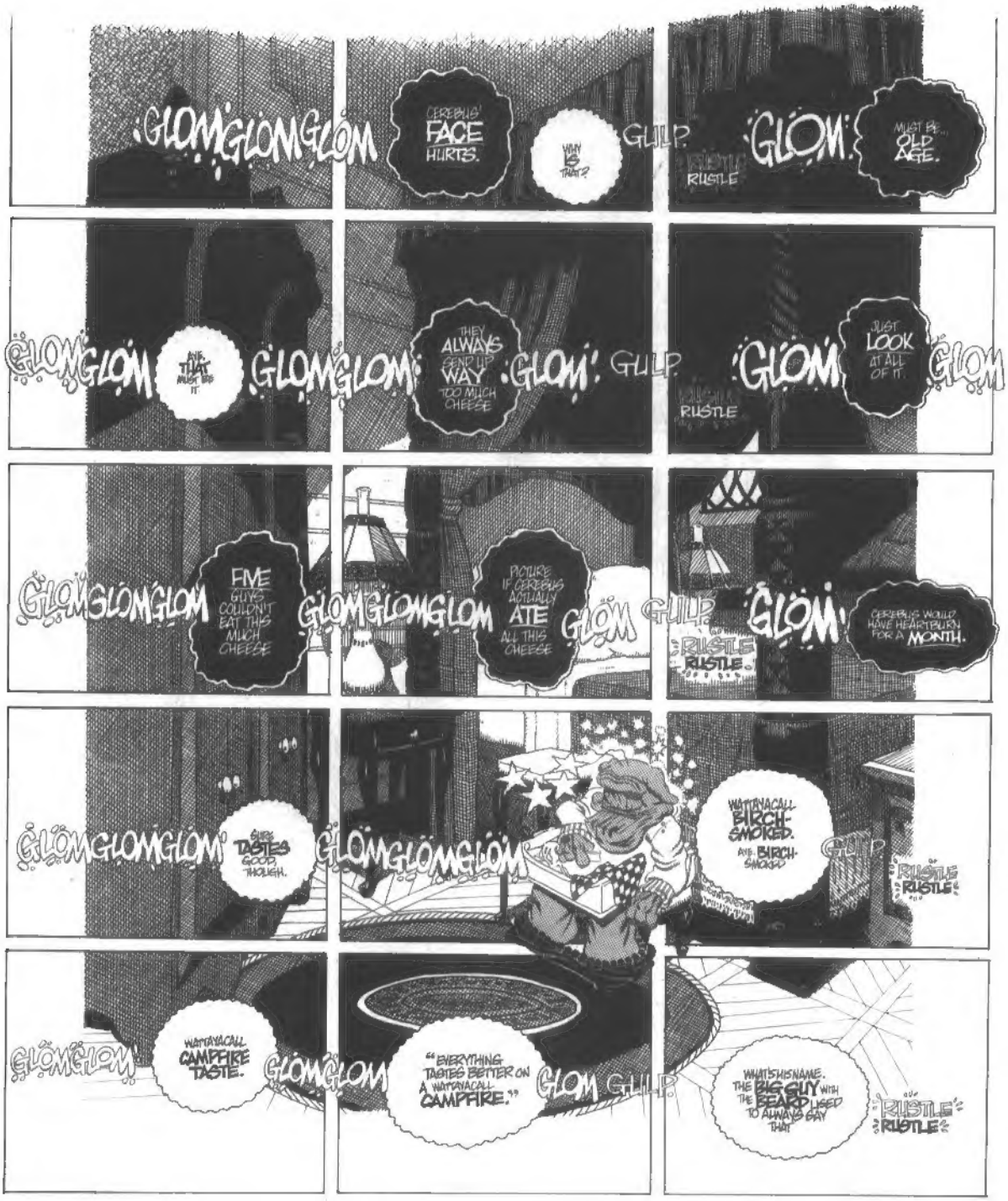
O'TRULY? WHAT (RIGHT NOW) TOPS THE LIST OF USELESS CRAP "LUXURIES" THAT ALL THESE NANCY-PANTS SANCTUARIES ARE JUST ACHING TO SPEND THEIR COLLECTION PLATE MONEY ON BUT THAT THEY'RE AFRAID TO BE ACTUALLY CAUGHT OWNING -- BECAUSE THEY KNOW CEREBUS WILL HAVE THEM SKINNED ALIVE AND DIPPED IN BRINE FOR WASTING THAT KIND OF MONEY--
WELL, SIR -- YOU KNOW, YOUR GUIDELINES ON SANCTUARY DECOR BUDGETS -- PARTICULARLY THE ALLOWABLE PERCENTAGE OF SANCTUARY REVENUES WHICH CAN BE ALLOCATED TO DECOR ARE STRINGENT BUT EXTREMELY FAIR. I FEEL SAFE IN SAYING, SIR, THAT ALL OF THE SANCTUARIES ARE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT THAT MINISTERING TO THE FAITHFUL IS OUR FIRST AND GREATEST
O'TRULY?
YES, SIR?
IF CEREBUS WANTS SUNSHINE BLOWN UP HIS ASS, CEREBUS WILL SAY: "O'TRULY? PLEASE BLOW SOME SUNSHINE UP CEREBUS' ASS."
IF (ON THE OTHER HAND) CEREBUS ASKS YOU A SIMPLE QUESTION...
THEN ALL CEREBUS WANTS (O'TRULY) IS A SIMPLE ANSWER

YES, SIR. WELL --
I'D HAVE TO SAY THAT THAT WOULD BE A REAL "TOSS-UP," SIR -- BETWEEN THE FUSCHIA- AND INCARNADINE-VEINED WHITE MARBLE FROM THE WESTERNMOST ESCARPMENT OF THE BUONARROTI QUARRY IN THE KOTA MOUNTAINS...
-- AND BOREALAN-HIGHLAND-DEER MINE-PLATINUM BAGGO RELIEVO WITH YELLOW GOLD FILIGREE AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL INTAGLIO INLAYS.
BOREALAN-HIGHLAND-DEER MINE-PLATINUM BAGGO RELIEVO WITH YELLOW GOLD FILIGREE AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL INTAGLIO INLAID WHAT.
PRETTY MUCH BOREALAN-HIGHLAND-DEER-MINE-PLATINUM BAGGO RELIEVO WITH YELLOW GOLD FILIGREE AND MOTHER-OF-PEARL INTAGLIO INLAID ANYTHING, SIR.
THANK YOU, O'TRULY
YOU'RE QUITE WELCOME, SIR.
SHUT UP A MINUTE, AGAIN
YES, SIR.

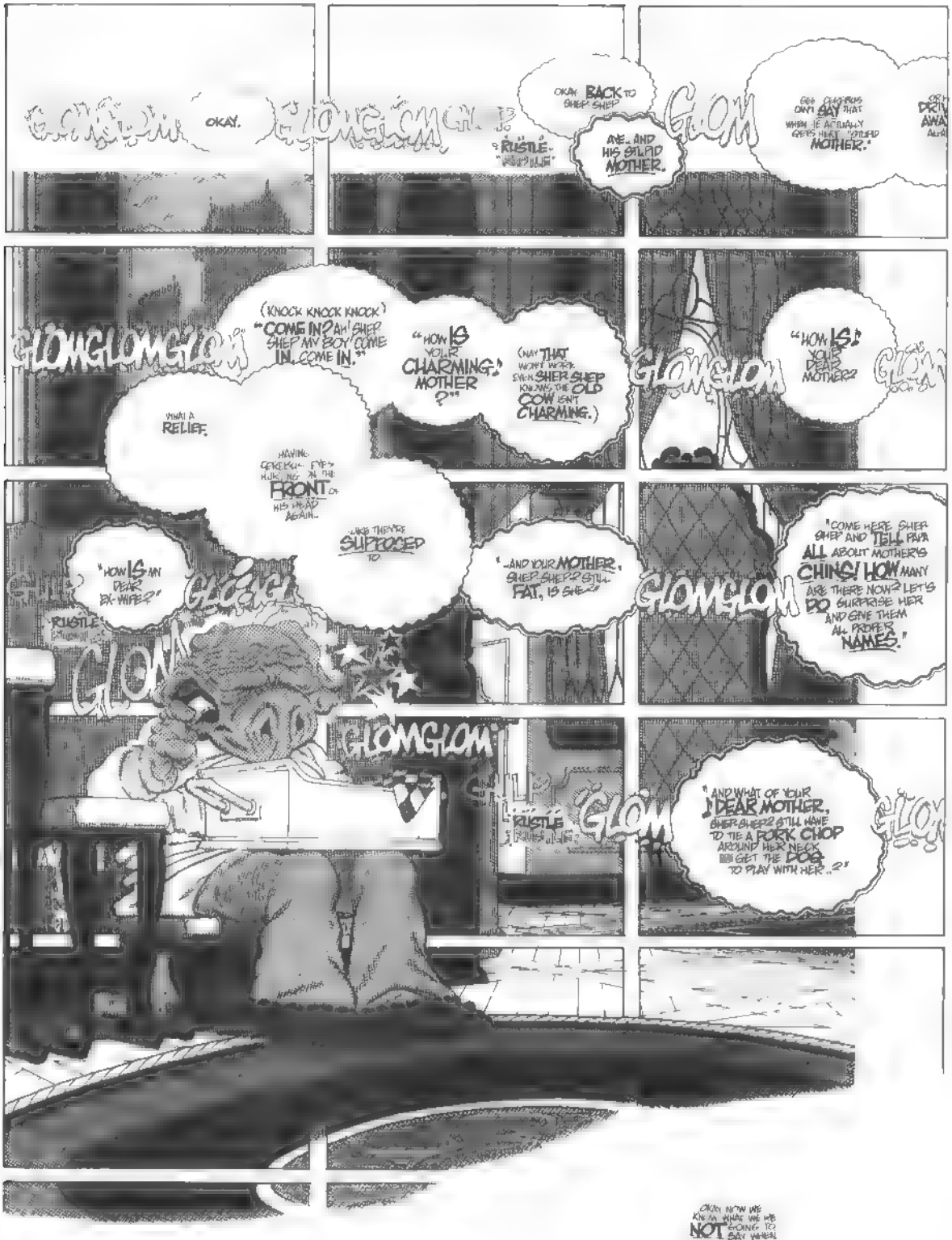
GUM GUM GUM GUM GUM GUM
ALL RIGHT. GO AND TELL THAT UPPER FELDAN ROO-FOO --QUIETLY-- THAT HE CAN RE-DO HIS ENTIRE SANCTUARY IN FUSCHIA- AND GABARDINE-VEINED WHITE MARBLE: CHOIR STALLS, NAVE, THREE-DECKER (NAY, MAKE THAT) FOUR-DECKER BOXES OF UNFINISHED (BUT MARBLE-COVERED) WOOD, PEWS, KNEELERS, BAPTISTRY, BAPTISMAL FONT, VAULTS, CRYPT, LADIES' ROOM, MEN'S ROOM, STALLS AND URINALS, FLOORS, CEILINGS, WALLS, WINDOWS, DOG-HOUSE, BIRD HOUSE, BELFRY, FRONT DOORS, BACK DOORS, FRONT STEPS, BACK STEPS. HE CAN EVEN SLAP SOME ON HIS WISE FELLOWS (IF THEY'LL HOLD STILL FOR IT)
IF HE LIFTS HIS VETO
NOW.
WOW! THAT SHOULD DO THE TRICK, SIR!
OH, AND SIR? THE KITCHEN SENT UP YOUR CHEESE TRAYS IF YOU'RE HUNGRY.
CHEESE TRAY!
CUH-RINK
THAT'S RIGHT! HE HAS TO OPEN THE DOOR TO GIVE CERBERUS THE CHEESE TRAY.
SIR? I SAID: "THE KITCHEN SENT UP YOUR
OH!♪
CRINK
CRINK
OH, THE CHEESE♪ TRAY. GOOD ♪IDEA, O'VERLY-- CERBERUS IS ♪STAR VING
LIMP
Limp
UH.
YES SIR.
WELL, LET ME SEE
CRINK
LIMP LIMP LIMP LIMP LIMP LI
Limp Limp Limp Limp Limp L

IT LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE A CHOICE, SIR, BETWEEN THE HICKORY-SMOKED LIGHTLY AGED CHEESE THAT GIVES YOU HEARTBURN ♪ ...
OR THE STRINGY WHITE CHEESE THAT STICKS TO YOUR DENTAL WORK ♪
♪HMMMMMMM
CRINK
CRINK
CRINK
ONLY ONE CHANCE TO GET THIS RIGHT.
HAVE TO BE CLOSE ENOUGH TO BLOCK THE DOOR SO HE THINKS IT'S ...STUCK... ON SOMETHING...
LIMP LIMP
...BUT FAR ENOUGH BACK SO WHEN HE GETS PART WAY IN...
CRINK
...CERBERUS CAN HIT HIM HARD ENOUGH WITH THE DOOR TO KNOCK HIM OUT.
CRINK
CRINK
CRINK
THE HICKORY-SMOKED, PLEASE ♪
YES SIR ♪
KLIK
KLAK
KLONK

WHOMP
SORRY, SIR...
THE TRAY SEEMS TO BE...
...STUCK!
ON SOMETHING
NAY!
NAY!
FLUMP
CERBUS HAS GOT IT!
WELL uh-- BON APPETIT, SIR-- I'LL BE BACK AS SOON AS I HAVE AN ANSWER FROM THE...
"UPPER FELDA FOO-FOO"
...SAME HERE, O'FLAHERTY!
...WRITE IF YA GET WORK!
ER--? YES, SIR!
THANK YOU, SIR...
SHHHK
LIMP LIMP
Limp Limp
...OH DON'T THANK YOU O'FLAGGERTY
...THANK CERBERUS...


GLOM GLOM GLOM
CEREBUS' FACE HURTS.
WHY IS THAT?
GULP
RUSTLE
GLOM
MUST BE... OLD AGE.
GLOM GLOM
AW, THAT MUST BE IT
GLOM GLOM
THEY ALWAYS SEND UP WAY TOO MUCH CHEESE
GLOM
GULP
RUSTLE
GLOM
JUST LOOK AT ALL OF IT.
GLOM
GLOM GLOM GLOM
FIVE GUYS COULDN'T EAT THIS MUCH CHEESE
GLOM GLOM GLOM
PICTURE IF CEREBUS ACTUALLY ATE ALL THIS CHEESE
GLOM
GULP
RUSTLE RUSTLE
GLOM
CEREBUS WOULD HAVE HEARTBURN FOR A MONTH.
GLOM GLOM GLOM
GIRL TASTES GOOD THOUGH.
GLOM GLOM GLOM
WHATDYACALL BIRCH-SMOKED.
AYE. BIRCH-SMOKED
GULP
RUSTLE RUSTLE
GLOM GLOM
WHATDYACALL CAMPFIRE TASTE.
GLOM GLOM
"EVERYTHING TASTES BETTER ON A WHATDYACALL CAMPFIRE."
GLOM
GULP
WHAT'S HIS NAME. THE BIG GUY WITH THE BEARD USED TO ALWAYS SAY THAT
RUSTLE RUSTLE

GLOM GLOM GLOM
GULP
KIK KIK
FOOM


OKAY.
OKAY BACK TO SHEEP SHEEP
AH... AND HIS SILLY MOTHER.
RUSTLE
"KNOCK KNOCK"
GLOMGLOMGLOM
(KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK)
"COME IN? AH! SHEEP SHEEP MY BOY COME IN. COME IN."
WHAT A RELIEF.
"HOW IS YOUR CHARMING MOTHER?"
(NAY THAT WON'T WORK EVEN SHEEP SHEEP KNOWS THE OLD COW ISN'T CHARMING.)
HAVING SEREBRAL SPASM HURLING IN THE FRONT OF HIS HEAD AGAIN.
WHO THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO
"HOW IS MY DEAR EX-WIFE?"
RUSTLE
"...AND YOUR MOTHER, SHEEP SHEEP? STILL FAT, IS SHE?"
GLOMGLOM
"HOW IS YOUR DEAR MOTHER?"
"COME HERE SHEEP SHEEP AND TELL PAPA ALL ABOUT MOTHER'S CHINS! HOW MANY ARE THERE NOW? LET'S DO SURPRISE HER AND GIVE THEM ALL PROPER NAMES."
RUSTLE
"AND WHAT OF YOUR DEAR MOTHER, SHEEP SHEEP? STILL HAVE TO TIE A PORK CHOP AROUND HER NECK TO GET THE DOG TO PLAY WITH HER..?"
OKAY, NOW WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE GOING TO SAY WHEN SHEEP SHEEP GETS HERE

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING TO SEE?
HEAR AGAIN
GLOM
GLOMGLOMGLOM
GLOM
GLOMGLOMGLOM
WHOA
THAT WAS REALLY! GOOD!
AYE! REAL QUIET AND SERIOUS LIKE THAT
(CEREBRUS GIVE HIMSELF CHILLS)
REALLY, REALLY GOOD
HEAR HIM AGAIN?)
(AND THEN PAUSE A SECOND.)
AYE AND SQUINT.)
(AYE SQUINTING CEREBRUS IS GOOD AT SINCE HIS EYES HAVE GONE BAD)
GLIP
RUSTLE
GLOM
GLOM
SHEE SHEE?
NO ENTRY
NO ENTRY

NAH NAH QUIETER

OH, ME AS

RUSTLE

GLO

GLOWGLOWGLOW... GULP

NOW I'M QUIETER
BEFORE IT WORKS

RUSTLE

GLOWGLOWGLOWGLOW...

NO ENTRY

AND THEN, BASICALLY, LET SHERSHEP DECIDE WHAT NEEDING TO BE DONE.

GLO

HE'S THE ONE WHOS GOING TO BE RUNNING THE SHOW

AYE.

GULP RUSTLE

IT'S TIME.. FOR CEREBELLUS TO JUST.. LET GO.

AYE.

GLO

HEH. PROBABLY HAVE A LOT OF QUESTIONS AND CEREBELLUS WILL JUST HAVE TO TELL HIM

"SHEP-SHEP?"

(QUIET...) UH! AYE.

"SHEP-SHEP? IT'S YOUR TURN NOW.."

GULP RUSTLE

GLOW

"YOU DO WHAT YOU THINK IS RIGHT."

GLOWGLOWGLOW!

GULP RUSTLE

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

RUSTLE

NOTHING BUT BROKEN-UP MEATS LEFT.

(THEY NEVER SHOW UP ENOUGH CHEESE.)

GLO

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

GLOW

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

GLOW

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

GLOW

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

WIN/WIN THE BROKEN-UP MEATS ALWAYS TASTE THE BEST!

MAKE BIRCH SMOKE IN 'EM.

RUSTLERUSTLE

GLOW

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

GLOW

RUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLERUSTLE

AYE. BUT... WHY? WHY WOULD THERE BE MORE BIRCH-SMOKE IN THE BROKEN-UP MEATS?

BEATS HELL OUT OF CEREBELLUS.

ASK SHEP-SHEP WHEN HE GETS HERE

MAYBE HE'LL KNOW

GLOM

WHOA.

THAT. WAS THE BEST. CHEESE CEREBUS HAS EVER. EVER. HAD

OH! AYE! DEF INITELY!

?

SAAAY THAT

FEELING?

AS IF SOMEONE HAD HEATED UP A KNIFE BLADE IN A CAMPFIRE AND WAS SLOOOWLY DRAGGING IT ACROSS CERBERUS' CHEST?

THAT WOULDN'T BE... HEARTBURN WOULD IT?

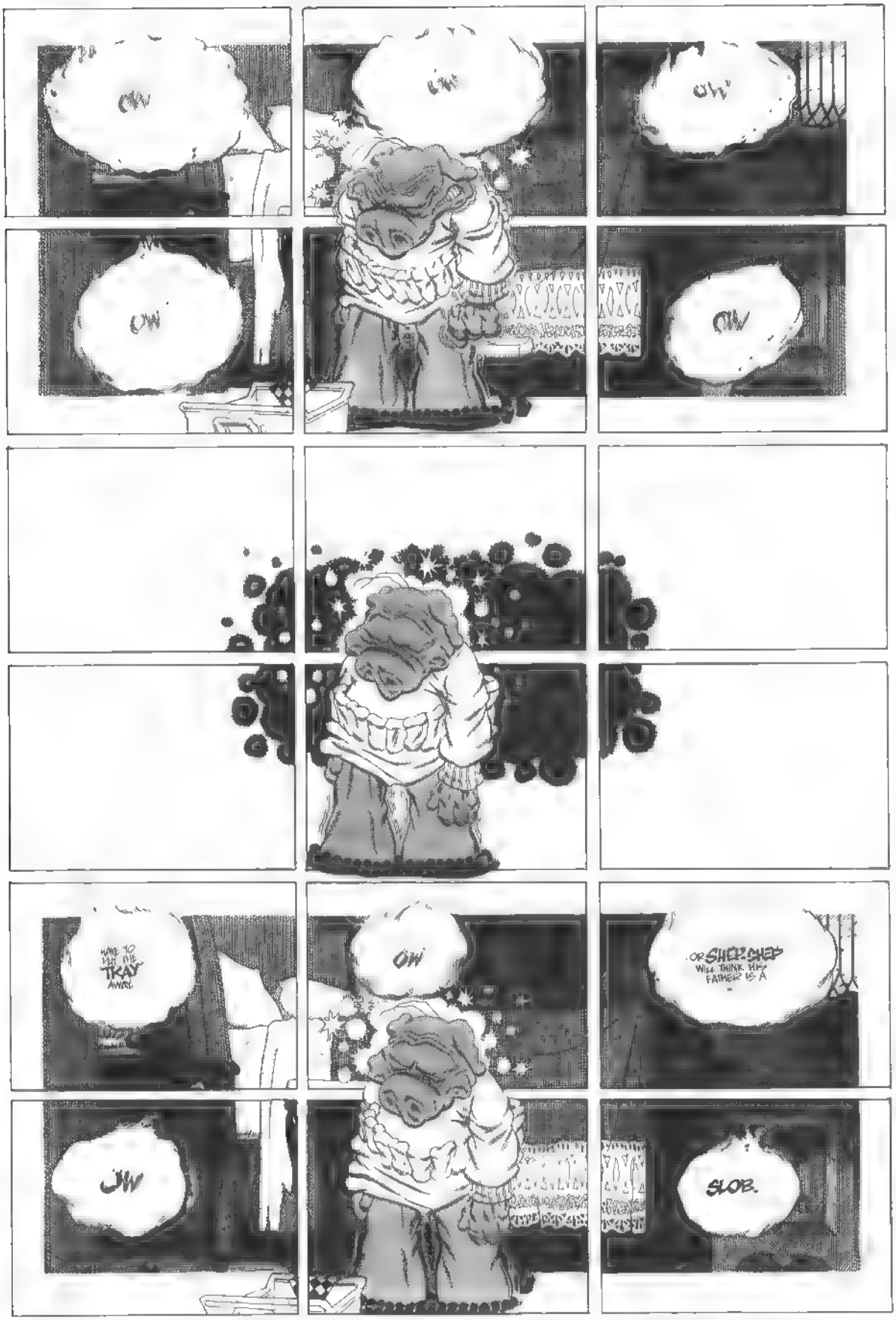
OH! AYE! DEF INITELY!

JUMP

HM. CERBERUS WAS AFRAID OF THAT

OH

OW OW


OW
OW
OW
OW
OW
HAVE TO PUT THE TRAY AWAY.
OW
OR SHE? SHE? WILL THINK HIS FATHER IS A
JW
SLOB.

AYE OW!
AND TUK UP ALL THE

OW.

LITTLE BITS OF CHEESE WHILE JERRELLS IS

OW.

WAWN THERE

PECKPECK PECKPECK

OW

GLOM

PECKPECK PECKPECK

OW

GLOM

PECKPECK PECKPECK

OW

PECKPECK PECKPECK

UM- THAT LAST CLUMP DIDN'T TASTE LIKE CHEESE

GLOM

PECKPECK PECKPECK

PART

Limp Limp

Limp Limp

Limp Limp

Limp Limp

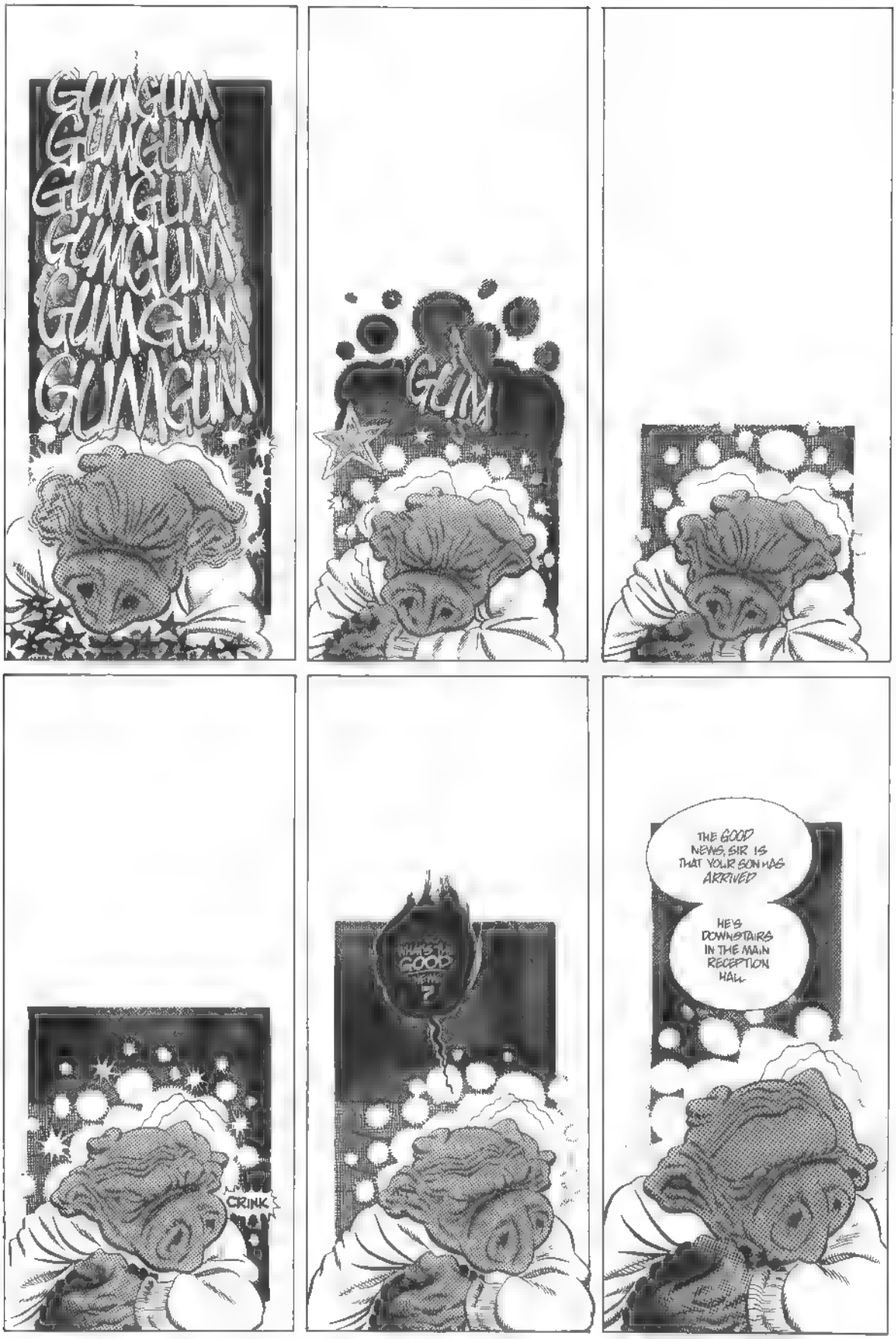
OTHERS SHOULD BE BACK BY NOW

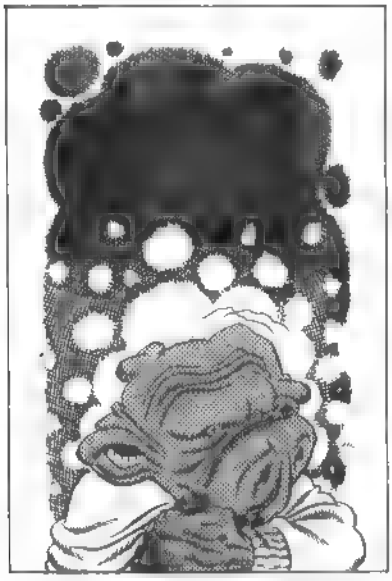
Limp Limp

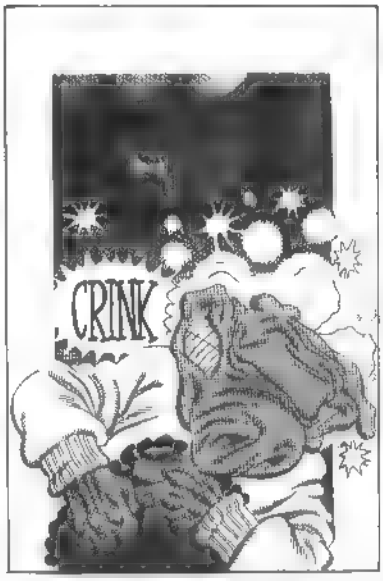
O'VERITY WITH AN "OW" T
NAY CEREBUS IS PRETTY SURE IT'S O'VERILY WITH AN "L"
SIR?
CRINK.
GAV. THERE YOUNG FELLER! IT JUST SLIPPED MIND... IS YOUR NAME "O'VERITY" WITH A "T"?
OR "O'VERILY" WITH AN "L"?
CRINK
ACTUALLY IT'S... UH... "O'REILLY," SIR
WITH A ...UH... "WALTER"

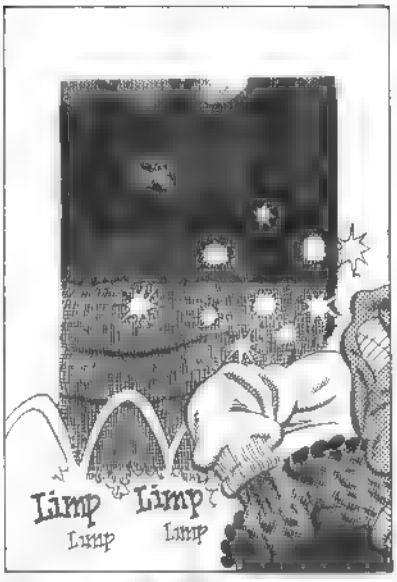
HEH-HEH! CERBUS KNOWS HOW HE'LL REMEMBER THAT ONE
OH HOW'S THAT, SIRS?
"WATER?"
"OH, REALLY?"
HAHA HAHA.
THAT'S VERY GOOD SIR
VERY AMUSING
A REAL KNEE-SLAPPER EH, O'VERLY?
CRINK
SIGH
YES SIR

SO!
WHEN DO I SHEP SHEP GET HERE?
WHICH DO YOU WANT FIRST SIR? THE GOOD NEWS? OR THE BAD NEWS?
GUM SHUM GUN SHUM
AH CRAP. GIVE CEREBUS THE BAD NEWS FIRST
THE BAD NEWS SIR IS THAT THE UPPER FELDAN ...uh... FOO-FOO REFUSES TO LIFT HIS VETO.
OW
WHAAAAT?! DIDN'T YOU THREATEN HIM LIKE CEREBUS TOLD YOU TO?
THAT WAS LAST TIME, SIR. THIS TIME YOU TOLD ME TO BRIBE HIM
OW
WHAAAAT?! DIDN'T YOU BRIBE HIM LIKE CEREBUS TOLD YOU TO?
YES, SIR. AND HE'S VERY INTERESTED. BUT HE INSISTS THAT THERE MUST BE A MUTUALLY AGREED-UPON-CHAPERONE IN THE ROOM THROUGHOUT YOUR MEETING TO ENSURE THAT YOU AND YOUR SON DON'T HAVE SEX
FORGET IT
OW
OW

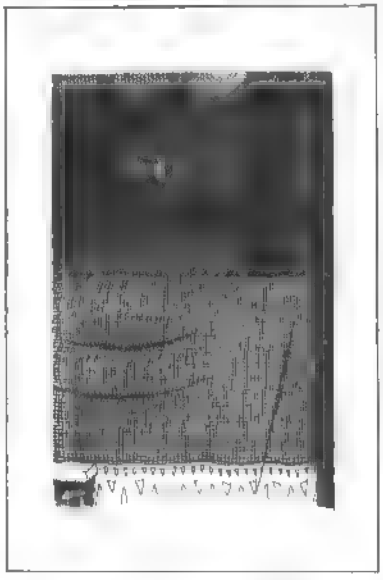

GUMGUM
GUMGUM
GUMGUM
GUMGUM
GUMGUM
GUMGUM
GUM
CRINK
WHAT'S THE GOOD NEWS?
THE GOOD NEWS, SIR IS THAT YOUR SON HAS ARRIVED
HE'S DOWNSTAIRS IN THE MAIN RECEPTION HALL



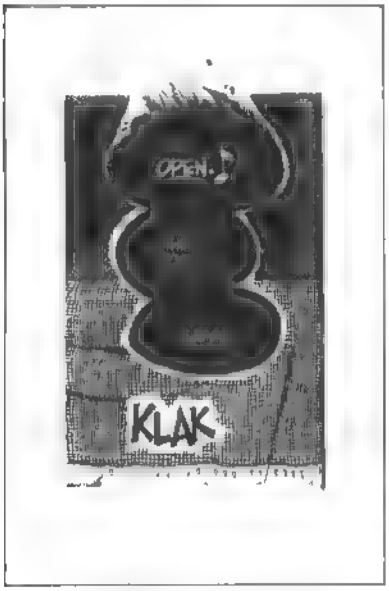

CRINK


Limp
Limp
Limp
Limp

Limp
Limp
Limp
Limp



O'VERILY?♪
IT'S uh O'REILLY SIR
O'REILLY?♪
YES, GIRD ♪


OPEN.
KLAK

I'M AFRAID I CAN'T DO THAT SIR AS I'VE ALREADY EXPLAINED. WE'RE IN A HEIGHTENED CONDITION STED LOCATES IN
OPEN.
THE FUCKING.
DOOR.
O'REILLY.
KLAK KLAK

SIR YOUR LANGUAGE
O'REILLY?
THINK OF GOD, SIR! WHAT WOULD GOD SAY?!

Getting Riel

part one

Getting *Riel*

Chester Brown discusses his graphic novel,
Louis Riel

Part One

Two notable instances of my being as wrong as one person can be. when I first heard about your doing a book on Louis Riel, *I thought, as I told you, "Chet's nuts. No one outside of Canada is going to be interested in reading about Riel." And when I saw it, I thought, "Chet's nuts. No one is going to buy a comic book that's an inch shorter and half an inch narrower than a* real *comic book. And what's with the light card stock covers?" We can get to your decision to do a book on Louis Riel in a minute. First, what was the evolution of the format? Where did you get the idea for it? What were you picturing and did it turn out the way you wanted it to?*

Regarding those two notable instances where you think that you were as wrong as one person can be? You can go back to thinking that you're right all the time—not only were there very few people outside Canada interested in reading a comic book about Louis Riel, but the book didn't do that well *inside* Canada either Maybe the graphic novel will do better—one can always hope

As to the paper stock: I had to fight Chris [*Oliveros, Drawn & Quarterly publisher*] on this. I wanted the book to be as inexpensive as possible which meant using a cheap grade of paper. Chris hates the way newsprint yellows so quickly, and he kept trying to convince me that there were nice cheap paper-stocks that were better than newsprint. We'd been experimenting with various kinds of cheap non-newsprint papers in *Underwater* and none of them looked good to me. Some of them were too transparent, some didn't take the ink well, and they all looked harshly over-white. I like the "warmth" of newsprint. Sure it gets yellow, but that just adds to that warm look. I ended up *insisting* that we use newsprint and *LR* was—for a Drawn & Quarterly title—relatively inexpensive. The last *Peepshow* was a dollar more than the *LR* cover price and the last *Palookaville* was two dollars more. Five to seven bucks for something that's only 24 pages seems kinda high to me.

The cover stock: I wanted a "warm" look again. I prefer that yellow matte card-stock to the slick, white, ugly stuff that you use for the covers of *Cerebus*.

The page size: I read a lot of books and their page sizes are almost always smaller than those of comic books. Comics just look kinda big and awkward to me now. I had also hoped that using the smaller page sizes would bring down the price even more, but that turned out not to be the case

The margin size: When I began using those odd-shaped panels in *Yummy Fur* 20 ("Showing Helder") [*reprinted in the collection,* The Little Man), I found I liked the look of having a lot of empty, open space on the page, so when I went back to more conventional panel layouts I decided to leave wide margins around the panels

I didn't sit down trying to think up a distinctive format—each choice was made separately. I'm happy with how all the elements came together. If I do say so myself, I think they're pretty good-looking comic books for the most part.

I agree. I thought you were shooting for a Victorian "Penny Dreadful" quality, missing it on the first cover (in my opinion) by trying to avoid genuine Victorian typography of the sort that Chris Ware used on Acme Novelty Library *since you insist on hand-lettering everything. I thought, come number two, he'll either have to cave in and use Victorian type or abandon the Victorian approach altogether. Wrong again. The cover compositions and hand-lettered typography on the remaining nine issues are very Victorian. A neat trick to pull off on short notice and with the few elements that you had to work with. Number nine especially, I thought was one of the best comic-book covers ever, with the shades of gray and the logo in a golden yellow.*

And I'm right with you on the "warmth" of newsprint. We use a "white" newsprint on Cerebus *but there are a lot of times I think regular newsprint would be an improvement. Wrightson's "Black Cat" adaptation was done on newsprint that practically (as Bill Cosby put it in one of his early routines) had "hunks of wood floating around on there." Even aged twenty years, it still looks a hundred times better than the laminated stock most comic books are printed on. I hate having to tilt the page to read it because an overhead light is bouncing off the page!*

I think Dan Clowes came up with a brilliant idea in "scanning" his colours off of old newspaper pages and old comic book pages The computer just matches colours, so you get the exact limited palette that they were using in the old Ben Day dot system plus the warmth of the aged newsprint colour Looks just like the real article even on slick, white, ugly stock like we use for our covers!

I want to get back to the decision-making you went through in developing the look of the book, but first I also want to deal with the actual content. If it's okay with you, we'll just skip back and forth between the two sides So

When did you first become aware of the Riel Legend? I ask this, because I suspect that, growing up in French/Roman Catholic Québec, you might've had a

greater awareness of Riel than I did growing up in English/Protestant Ontario. If I'm way off base with that, I'd still like to have a rough idea of what your mental picture of Riel and his Rebellion (or "rebellion") was before you decided to actually tackle the story yourself.

Growing up in Québec did *not* give me an advantage in the "acquiring-knowledge-about-Riel" department. Prior to 1995—which was when I read Maggie Siggins' biography of the man—I knew the following about Louis Riel: he was a French Métis; he led a rebellion in Winnipeg in the nineteenth century; he was somehow responsible for someone's execution; there was a big fuss about that; and he himself was hanged. And that's everything that I would have been able to remember on that subject from my grade eight history class. And when I say everything, I mean absolutely *everything*. I could not have come up with even one more detail —not a year, not a place-name—nothing. Maybe francophones in Québec learned more about Riel, but I grew up in an English bubble. I don't remember anyone ever talking about Riel outside of a history classroom. He must have been mentioned in the media, but I wasn't paying attention. I certainly didn't watch that CBC-TV movie about Riel that aired in the late 70s. I had no interest Now, I've got it on video. One of the few videos that I own.

Now all you need is a TV and a VCR. In defense of my own thesis, that puts you way ahead of me, Chet. In Ontario, we were taught what really amounted to the Hudson's Bay Company History of Canada. It was taken as a given that the HBC was a sort of interchangeable entity with the Canadian government and the British Parliament As far as I was taught, Champlain and Cartier discovered Quebec but that was it until the HBC just sort of landed in Hudson's Bay and happily mapped out and built the whole country without so much as having to ask someone to move their teepee. The first I knew of Louis Riel was when I was in my last year of school and John Balge and I were doing CANAR and there was this Socialist/Communist print shop collective in town called Dumont Press Graphics where we got the negatives—and later the typesetting—done at the cheapest prices around. John was an ardent Trotskyite back in those days so that was his "in" with them. I was the dopey kid with John who was always bringing in these Conan pictures to get stats made of Anyway, they had this Buffalo-Bill-looking guy on their logo who—I found out by flipping through as little of their on-site literature as I could manage—was Gabriel Dumont and only later that he was connected with Louis Riel. I just assumed from the context that Dumont and Riel were Wild West Communists of some kind. I'm not sure that anything I've read since then has persuaded me otherwise. Just kidding So, 1995 Which book were you working on at the time and when did Louis Riel *get put into the "on-deck" circle? You have the on-going adaptations of the Gospels,* The Playboy *and* I Never Liked You, *both of which you finished and your problem child,* Underwater, *which we can talk about as little or as much as you like*

Before we deal with 1995, *Riel: A Life of Revolution* by Maggie Siggins was published in hardcover in 1994. I saw it in a bookstore and flipped through it, thinking something like, "This guy's supposed to have been a significant figure in our history—I really should know something about him." Then I looked at the price and thought something like, "I can wait for the paperback."

Also in 1994, the first two issues of *Underwater* were released. I don't think I want to talk too much about that series. I suspect that discussing its problems too much in print might kill any desire I have to return to it in the future. Let's just say that I bit off more than I could chew. Not that I realized that in 1994

In 1995, issues 3 and 4 of *Underwater* came out Number 4 contained "My Mom Was a Schizophrenic". I really enjoyed the process of creating that strip. I'd read a lot of books about "mental illness" and had condensed the anti-psychiatry argument into a six-page strip It was so much fun, that I wanted to do something like that again—do a lot of research on a subject and cram it all into a strip. I thought that it would be a good idea to look for a biographical or historical subject. A life-story or a series of historical events would provide me with the kind of narrative structure that the schizophrenia strip had lacked.

And then the Siggins book was released in paperback in the fall of '95. I read the book and thought, "That's a good dramatic story—it'd make a good strip Maybe I'll do that when I finish *Underwater. If* I can finish *Underwater.*" By that point I realized that I was in trouble with the series. But, I continued to work on it for another two years. In the fall of '97, I took a break to work on the *Little Man* book. While I was doing that, my dad died. I finished *The Little Man* in February of '98 and sat down to begin *Underwater* #12, but I couldn't get started on it. After a few days of doing nothing, I decided: I'll set this project aside until I solve its problems—if I go further with it now, I'll just be wasting my time. My father's death had me thinking that I did not want to be wasting my time. I called up Chris Oliveros and asked him what he thought of the idea of me doing a comic-strip biography about Louis Riel He didn't put up any resistance, so I got to work on it.

Interesting. That was sort of like my first experience with Oscar Wilde. I saw a biography in a bookstore and thought, I bet that would be interesting. The only thing I knew about him was that he had written Picture of Dorian Gray *which I had seen adapted as a TV-movie and I was interested in where the idea had come from My instincts were pretty good. The fact that Wilde wrote* Picture of Dorian Gray before *he met Lord Alfred Douglas is, to me, one of the most amazing instances of life actually imitating art (second spot would be Dashiell Hammett creating Bridgette O'Shaughnessy, the pathological liar in* The Maltese Falcon, *before he met Lillian Hellman). But, I thought, I can't buy a biography of Oscar Wilde: the cashier will think I'm* gay. *I*

got over it and went back a couple of weeks later to try to find it, but it was gone. It wasn't until the Richard Ellman biography came out that I got another chance. Back in those days when I still had time to read books, it was one of my major self-indulgences to buy hardcovers and not have to wait for the paperback. "The cashier is really *going to think I'm gay, buying the hardcover." With all the reading that I did—once I decided that I was going to make Oscar a character in* Cerebus*—I have to say that the Ellman biography is still the best. Since you've read* beaucoup de *Riel books by now, I'm curious as to whether that was the case for you, as well: is the Siggins book the best—or did you find someone better as you went along? And how would you rate the Riel biographers you've read?*

Of the Riel-related books that I ploughed through, the one that would probably be the best for a general reader is *Prairie Fire: the 1885 North-West Rebellion* by Bob Beal and Rod Macleod. It's a good, dramatic telling of the story. But it's not specifically about Riel –he's one of many characters in it, not the central one.

Yeah, if you're looking for a book that is specifically about Riel, the best biography is the Siggins one.

Some people prefer Joseph Howard's *Strange Empire: The Story of Louis Riel,* but I found Howard's writing-style to be too self-consciously "literary" for my taste. I like writers who are more direct. If this had been the first book about Riel that I'd picked up, I doubt I'd have made it past the first chapter

Louis Riel by George Stanley (the designer of the Canadian flag) and *The Life of Louis Riel* are a bit on the colourless side. They were still useful to me—especially the Charlebois book which has photographs and drawings on almost every page.

Thomas Flanagan's *Louis "David" Riel: "Prophet of the New World"* is biographical in structure, but it's really a study of the development of Riel's religious thinking. I enjoyed it, particularly because Flanagan accepts Thomas Szasz's contention that "mental illnesses" aren't illnesses.

I also enjoyed Flanagan's second Riel book, *Riel and the Rebellion: 1885 Reconsidered.* While Siggins sees Riel as a hero and the Métis' cause as just, Flanagan thinks the Rebellion was a mistake and that Riel was more concerned with satisfying the needs of his ego than with doing what would have been best for his followers.

I tend to find conspiracy books fun, and *1885: Métis Rebellion or Government Conspiracy* by Don McLean wasn't an exception.

Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885 by Douglas Sprague mostly focuses on the legal mechanisms that Sprague claims were used to oppress the Métis. It sounds dull, but it also has some conspiracy-theory stuff, and Sprague's sarcasm and barely-contained anger enliven the read.

Can you do a quick Reader's Digest *distillation of what Don McLean thought was the government conspiracy behind the Rebellion?*

The Canadian Pacific Railway was close to being bankrupt. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald wanted to keep the company alive, but the Canadian government had already given it lots of money and didn't want to shell out any more. Then the Métis rebelled against the government, and the CPR was used to transport the Canadian troops who put down the Rebellion. Parliament suddenly saw the military usefulness of the trains and gave the Railway all the financial support it wanted.

McLean speculates that Macdonald foresaw what would happen if the Métis rebelled and deliberately provoked them into doing so.

I know you're a conspiracy enthusiast. Did this one strike you as likely, far-fetched or something in between?

Something in between. As I wrote in the notes section of *Louis Riel* 6, (pages 258 and 259 in the book), "I honestly don't have a strong opinion on the matter one way or the other."

I just re-read the first three issues—a little more closely this time since we're doing this dialogue—and the centrality of the "legal mechanisms" became more apparent to me, right off the top. Obviously, the Rebellion ultimately comes down to who's right and who's wrong. It seems to me that the seminal point of that question is; did the British crown have the right in the 17th century to designate vast tracts of North America as the sole possession of the Hudson's Bay Company or were those lands the possession of the Indian tribes that inhabited them? Possession is nine-tenths of the law, we are assured, but there is also a legal principle called "easement" which basically states, if you knowingly let someone cut across your lawn for years and years you can't one day decide to charge them with trespassing

I've never heard of easement before (and I don't like the concept so far) but I'm guessing that, in the example you give, easement would allow the trespasser who cut across the lawn to continue to do so, and that it would *not* give the trespasser the deed to the whole property and home. Provided my guess is right, it would seem to me that the easement argument would have allowed the Hudson's Bay Company to claim as theirs whatever trading posts and forts they'd set up and which the local Indians hadn't objected to, and it would *not* justify an HBC claim of sovereignty over *all* of Rupert's Land.

But the phrase "objected to" is kind of stacking the deck, isn't it? You're implying—or maybe I'm just inferring here—that the land belonged to the Indians. There was perhaps just as valid a case to be made for the HBC having not "objected to" the Métis farming on HBC land up to the time of the Rebellion. The fact that it was

Métis who were the complainants and not full-blooded Indians would imply, to me, that their claim would've been preempted by the earliest legal action taken by the British Crown. Full-blooded Indians could maybe claim that they had "been there first," but, to have (pardon my political incorrectness) half-breeds as the disputants—well, there couldn't have been any half-breeds before the white people got here, right?

If I've been implying it up to this point, then let me be clear: The land belonged to the Indians before the HBC arrived on the scene and that didn't change just because Charles II said so in 1680.

But I think that getting into questions of who has first right to the land by blood-line is getting away from the heart of the 1869 dispute. There were white settlers on the Red River who also objected to the sale of Rupert's Land to Canada—particularly the Irish Fenians in the community, who didn't like Canada's connection to Britain

The settlement had been run by a council of HBC appointees. One of the reasons the HBC was anxious to sell its rights to Canada was that, as the settlement grew, the problems related to governance got more complicated. The HBC didn't want that headache any more—it just wanted to trade and make money. So it sold the mess to the Canadian government, which (being in the governance business) wanted the headache The question wasn't so much one of land-ownership, as it was one of sovereignty—who rules over us. No one in the settlement (not even the HBC employees who lived there) knew that the HBC was selling Rupert's Land to Canada They only found out about it after the fact by reading the newspapers from out east It doesn't seem strange to me that some of the inhabitants of the settlement were unhappy that they hadn't had a say in the matter

There *were* concerns over land-ownership, too If my memory of the situation is correct, it went something like this. When the HBC started the settlement in 1812, it purchased a strip of land from some local Indians. A record of land-ownership was kept by the HBC for that original strip of land. But, as the settlement grew beyond its original borders, people squatted on unoccupied land. By 1869, only the settlers living within the original settlement boundaries had deeds that were registered with the HBC. When the HBC sold Rupert's Land to Canada, some of the-settlers-who-didn't-have-deeds-registered-with-the-HBC were concerned that they were going to lose their farms. Hence the nervousness over the appearance of surveyors on pages 4 to 7 of the first issue. (Pages 9 to 12 in the book)

The origin of the name of our country seems relevant here by legend, one of the early explorers asked one of the natives, basically, what do you call this place? To which the native replied, Kanata (the land) You know—what sort of a moron are you? This is the land and that over there, all that wet stuff you can't walk around on? That's *called water. You can idealize it if you want—and most people in this country do—the noble savage who has no notion that the land can be owned by anyone, it is there for everyone, First Nations Marxism. But, if that's true, what was the purpose of having different tribes? What was the purpose of those tribes going to war with each other—as they frequently did*

Yeah, there was clearly a concept of land-ownership, but tribal or communal land ownership is different than a system of private land-ownership I think we're both in agreement that the latter is superior to the former.

I think we are, yes Sorry. I always forget that you're not a Marxist So, the tribal or communal land may be there for everyone, but, after a given Indian War, this *land is* Iroquois *land, because the Iroquois are the baddest bad asses in this here part of the kanata, the non-wet stuff you can walk around on So, at that point the question, to me, becomes can you hold the land that you claim? Whether it's the British government, the Hudson's Bay Company, the government of Canada (at that time just a branch office of the British crown) or WalMart, legal and/or military muscle determine what you own and what you control It's one of the reasons that I warn small pressers not to take their works to DC or Marvel. You may think it's yours You may be right, legally. But you have to beat them in court to prove it and legal might makes legal right and an individual has about as much chance of beating a multinational corporation in court as the Iraqi Republican Army had of beating the United States Army, Air Force and Marines Any thoughts on this?*

If you're asking if I believe that might makes right no, I do not. Feel free to dig deeper here—I'm just not sure where you're coming from

Let me try the question this way: is it that you believe might doesn't *make right, or that might* shouldn't *make right?*

Both. If I steal your property, I'm doing something wrong, even if I'm powerful enough to get away with it. You're not seriously arguing otherwise, are you?

Oh, definitely. If I find myself in your fashionable King Street Toronto condo, see my stolen property sitting in plain sight, and I say to you, "Say, Chet. That's not yours, that's mine," take my property back, and have to, you know, muscle you out of the way so I can leave with it, am I stealing? And if you, in all sincerity, honestly believe it to be yours—you've had it for so long that you've actually forgotten how you came to be in possession of it or the terms under which it came to be in your possession are so indistinct as to, in your mind, make a better case in your mind for your owning it—and you call the police and tell them that I'll be heading down Queen Street West to the Sheraton and I have property stolen from you in my possession, aren't you using "might,"—albeit one step removed—by using the police to intercept me, detain me and remove my prop-

erty from my own possession?

And isn't that really the situation in the Red River settlement? The nervousness over the appearance of the surveyors wasn't just about whether or not people were going to lose "their" farms, but whether those farms were "theirs" in any legal sense to begin with. You may not be fond of "easement," but for those settlers outside the "strip of land", those without deeds to Rupert's Land property, "easement" is going to be a substantial part of their legal defense. It's really the only basis on which "squatting" becomes legal· you have to object and take action against the squatters or answer to some authority as to why you chose not to for two hundred years

Dave, do you believe that everyone has a right to life, liberty, and their property? (I prefer the old French formula for the fundamental rights—"life, liberty and property" to Jefferson's "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness").

You're evading my point. Let me "cut to the chase" and see what you think. Similar to your own enthusiasm for conspiracy theories, I'm always looking for the "finger of God" in stories these days. What I've been edging around is to try and get you to admit that the Red River settlement was a pretty messy bundle of over-lapping claims. There's the Indian claim, the Métis claim, the British crown claim, the Canadian government claim and the Hudson's Bay Company claim. Being human, we can just throw up our hands and say, It's too complicated. Which, in my view, is a luxury that God doesn't have. He has to sort out who is going to prevail and I believe He sorts these things out in His own idiosyncratically scrupulously even-handed fashion. Once Riel was universally accepted as the Métis leader—both for the fact that he spoke English and because he was generally well thought of by the community—that allowed God to personalize and individualize the conflict.

Everyone agreed that Riel represents the Métis? asks God. The "ayes" have it. Good.

Then God, realizing that the mess was going to get a good deal messier in short order—motivated John Schultz to react to Riel the way that Riel was reacting to the Canadian government. That is, Hey, we're getting steamrolled here! We have to make a stand. When John Schultz gets the band of forty-five Canadian loyalists together inside his home, it becomes the Red River settlement in microcosm. Forty-five guys surrounded by three hundred Métis, metaphorically the same situation that will soon be confronting the Métis facing a much larger force of Canadian soldiers.

Schultz and his men realize they're outnumbered and surrounded and, as Riel has done with Ottawa, they send out a list of demands. What does Riel do? He tears up the list of demands and tells them they will be spared if they surrender and he gives them fifteen minutes to decide before the Metis start firing.

The die is cast—Riel has made the decision himself as to how he and the Métis should be (and, consequently, will be) treated by Ottawa. What do you think so far?

I'm really not a conspiracy enthusiast—I'm *not* always thinking of the possible conspiracy angle in stories in the way that you're looking for the "finger of God" angle. If anything, I'm always looking for the property rights angle—that's been my hobby-horse for the last four years or so.

Anyway—the finger of God as I think I've mentioned to you before, it seems more likely to me that there is a God than that there isn't one, and my mental-model-of-how-things-work assumes that there is some kind of "higher power" and an after-life of some sort. But I haven't come to any definite conclusions about the nature of God, and that just-mentioned mental-model-of-how-things-work is *very* vague on matters that don't deal with this "real" world that we find ourselves in when we're "awake".

Believing that we have free will, I always assume that God has a hands-off policy as far as our actions are concerned, so I have an initial resistance to the idea of God "motivating" Schultz, though it perhaps is possible in some way that we can have free-will *and* that God can work his will through us at the ame time. But, I notice that your scenario has Schultz being motivated by God, while Riel, in your scenario, seems to act all on his own.

Leaving aside the question of God's role in the story, your observation of a parallel between how Riel-and-the-Métis treated the forty-five "Schulzites" and how Canada treated Riel-and-the-Métis is clever and accurate. You're right—what Riel did, was later done to him. There's a similar (but probably more obvious) parallel between the Scott and Riel executions. Again, what Riel did, was later done to him.

The idea that Schultz is motivated by God is pure guesswork on my part. The analogy between the Schultz-and-Riel and (I agree with you) Scott-and-Riel situations jumped out at me and then I try to track it forward and backward from there. As I've told you before, I don't pretend to understand the rules of how spirit or Spirits behave, but I am intrigued by what I see as their manifestations. I want to explore that further, but for the moment, I've been a bad host, monopolizing our dialogue with my own legalistic viewpoint. Given that you've had a good four years to examine the property rights involved, this would probably be a good place for you to lay out what you see as the "bottom line" in the dispute over the Red River properties which are now called Winnipeg.

I don't know if I've examined anything—I've read some books and have some opinions based on what's in those books. Also, I want to note that I started working on Riel over five years ago, not four, so when I began the series I had zero interest in the story's property rights issues.

The bottom-line issues are, did any of the Métis benefit from the land-grant that was promised to them in the 1870 Manitoba Act? (*Louis Riel* 4, p.3 & *LR* 5,

p.15—pp. 77 & 117 in the book.) The two academics I've read on the subject who've actually dug through the primary sources—Sprague and Flanagan—have views that are diametrically opposed. I think that Flanagan's a bit closer to the truth. Probably very few of the Red River Métis lost much in the way of land and most of the Métis who were supposed to benefit from the land grant did so. (But not in the way that Riel wanted them to benefit—not in a way that resulted in a strong Métis community by the Red River.) There was a lot of bureaucratic delay and bungling and some fraud, which caused justifiable anger, but the picture probably wasn't as bleak as Sprague paints it.

Mind you, I didn't read Flanagan's views on the matter until after I'd picked up the second edition of his *Riel and the Rebellion* in 2000, which was after I'd drawn *Louis Riel* 4 (I specify the second edition, because Flanagan wrote the first edition before he'd examined the primary sources himself, so he'd originally relied on Sprague's research and conclusions.)

Now, that's *interesting. How bleak a view did Sprague take? And how diplomatic was Flanagan in "calling" him on it?*

I'll let you be the judge.

"[T]he merits of Sprague's work are overridden by defects that make it imprudent for researchers to rely on his conclusions without an independent check of primary sources. In his eagerness to condemn the governments of Canada and Manitoba and to vindicate the rights of the Métis, Sprague rushes into interpretations that simply cannot be sustained."

(Flanagan, Métis Lands in Manitoba, p.8)

The following is from Flanagan's discussion of the land grants to the Métis·

"There may also have been some cases of fraud, theft, or impersonation, as is alleged by land-claims advocates; but only a tiny handful of such cases has been documented. Frustration over inability to demonstrate actual cases of fraud has led Sprague into the netherworld of conspiracy theory, arguing that thousands of Manitoba land-transfer records must have been forged"

(*Riel and the Rebellion*, pp 72, 73)

Sprague contends that "hundreds" of the Métis squatters were forced off their land (*Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885,* p.133), while Flanagan seems to think that none were. Flanagan makes it clear that he's talking about settlers who'd been squatting before the Manitoba Act of 1870 went into effect, and Sprague is less clear, so perhaps a significant number of Sprague's hundreds were people who'd started squatting *after* 1870.

I should point out that, just because I think Flanagan's likely to be more right on those two particular "bottom line" property questions, that doesn't mean that I think Sprague is necessarily wrong about everything or that Flanagan is right about everything. They deal with lots of other things in their books.

I'd say that was a pretty diplomatic way of saying that Sprague was "off-base". And somewhere between zero and "hundreds" of Métis losing their claim –given the temper and momentum of the times—makes the whole thing something of a tempest in a teapot.

I thought you were pretty good at depicting that temper and momentum. I mean, there was a steamroller effect that was, inevitably going to come into play. As you say in your notes, John A. Macdonald wasn't a complete villain in the piece Once the pioneer, nation-building spirit takes hold and there are immense sums of tax dollars at stake on a railroad that seems perpetually half-finished and which has to reach British Columbia or the "National Dream" is dust and ashes and once that spirit is coupled with political ambition...well, there are going to be casualties. I thought it was interesting in your notes when you pointed out that although there seemed to be the good will to assist Canada's First Nations to begin farming (as an example), what actually happened "on the ground" was sort of "all will and little way". They were given very inferior farming materials, very few supplies and what they thought were guarantees of food while they were waiting for their first crops to grow turned out to be no guarantees at all.

And the world of nature wasn't cooperating either. Again, I see the finger of God in this. The buffalo begin retreating before the onslaught of civilization Do you follow the buffalo west or do you stay put and change the nature of your way of life? And the sad part for the Red River Métis was that they had *changed their way of life. They* were *farmers and had been for some time But, I maintain the debate was still going to come down to: whose land was it by law? Your own observation earlier that the HBC had purchased a small strip of land from a specific band of local Indians for the territory occupied by the original settlement is probably—along with easement or a related legal basis—the strongest claim that the land belonged to the Indians How else could you buy a strip of that land from them? It would imply that the land* outside *of that strip belonged to the Indians until they sold it to someone. With that in mind, it becomes really complicated because the squatters aren't squatting on HBC land or part of Canada, they're squatting on Indian lands. Where would you contest jurisdiction? Did the Indians have a First Nations equivalent of a Court of Appeal that the Métis could have gone to? And didn't the Métis—by actively negotiating with Canada—imply that Canada had sovereignty over them? It seems to me that, as you say, the issue is one of "who is going to rule over us?"*

I want to get back to what I see as the central dynamic of the story, Riel's own choices and how those choices may have been influenced, but this is a forum about your work and your ideas, so I don't want to give property rights short shrift at all

Am I being too legalistic here, doing what I accuse Liberals of doing which is multiplying "on the other hand" complexities where they don't exist to obscure a basic "right versus wrong" issue?

I think it'll be more fun if you ask questions-that-Dave-Sim-thinks-are-interesting than if you ask questions-that-Dave-Sim-thinks-might-be-interesting-to-Chester-Brown. And get as legalistic as you want to.

"Didn't the Métis—by actively negotiating with Canada—imply that Canada had sovereignty over them?"

Uh . no

If I own something and someone else wants it, and I negotiate with them to see what they'll give me for it, that doesn't mean they already own it. If I don't like what they're offering, I'm free to say so and walk away.

The Red River Settlers achieved self-rule in 1869 and they were free to choose who they wanted to be sovereign over them Admittedly, there weren't many choices before them There was Canada, and there was the U.S. The third possible choice—remaining an autonomous mini-state—was probably never seriously considered. (They undoubtedly realized that they wouldn't be *allowed* to remain an autonomous mini-state—better to negotiate and get the best deal you can than to have a choice forced on you) I think that Canada was chosen over the U.S , not because it already had sovereignty, but because that was the genuine will of the people. More people in the Settlement had ties to Canada and Britain than had ties to the U S

That rather nicely takes us back to the finger of God As I said, I think that God pretty much satisfied Himself—by either "initiating," "provoking" or "allowing to happen" Riel finding himself in the situation of judging himself in microcosm—with what the ultimate outcome of the Rebellion was going to be. It's interesting to consider the myriad alternatives. What if Riel had agreed to negotiate with Schultz? What if Riel had, indeed, done anything besides what he did? Tearing up the list of demands and saying Schultz had fifteen minutes to surrender or they would start shooting? If someone had pointed out to him the analogy of his situation to that of Schultz, would he have behaved differently?

And then you have the earlier situation with Scott which represented, to me, what was going to happen, stripped to its absolute bare essentials. "This guy here is going to kill this other guy really brutally and then he's going to get killed himself". Real "eye-for-an-eye" stuff

The choices that Riel makes regarding Scott, as you mentioned, seal his fate as well. Scott is no threat to Riel or to the settlement. He's locked up. But, then he starts swearing, loudly, denouncing Riel and the Métis, non-stop. You devote four pages to it which indicates—and I think you were right—that what happens here is central to the ultimate fate of Riel and the rebellion.

[a not-so-short detour: I remember talking with Seth at the Now & Then Books anniversary party, enthusing about how Riel *was coming along and saying, you know, this could be sold in huge quantities in schools, libraries, universities and Seth saying to me in his characteristic dry-as-dust fashion, "Yeah, if everyone can just keep their pants on, it could be a real breakout, mainstream success" And I laughed, because it was such a Seth thing to say. His belief that you're this inherently contrary, inherently perverse being who will actively undermine his own chance at success by exposing a character's penis just for the sake of it. And then I mentioned the comment to you the next time you and I and Joe and Seth were at Sushi on Bloor. And Seth was* stricken! Absolutely stricken! *He slumped over, grabbing his forehead. Seth! What? What is it, man? And Seth said that everyone had taken a vow of silence (practically) not to say a word to you and that, being Chester Brown, now you would* have *to expose someone's penis because someone had mentioned what a bad idea it would be. And to me, this is nonsense! And the handling of the swearing scene, to me, exemplifies what nonsense that is. Eight pages of swearing and vile racial epithets, louder and louder and worse and worse. And how does Chet handle it? X's! You show him saying, "Imprisoned by a bunch of XXXXX XXXX XXXXX"(and indicate in a footnote that "these Xes indicate racist comments and profanity") which is fairly innocuous, followed by "I'm not scared of your XXXXX XXX guards!" You* sort of *go over the "PG" line with "They're too busy XXXX XXXXXXX each other to bother shooting me!" I mean, anyone can and will mentally fill in those particular XX's and I can picture any number of school librarians getting their noses out of joint over something like that. But then, you retreat back across the line to safety with "Riel, you XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX" And that's it for any recognizable word. Over four pages of mostly XXXXXXX Not even X@#$%&. Now, me. I would've gotten to that part and thought, hm. What insults would he be letting fly with? And I'd lean into it. When Cerebus was trying to improve to please God, I'd letter "no swearing" over a swear-word—indicating his own self-censorship—but most of the time, if it's called for, I'll just use "fuck" or "shit" where I think it's needed Or even worse as far as most people, I think, would be concerned in this day and age, I'll use "faggy" or something like that which is probably a closer analogy to the "racist comments" you edged around. But it seems obvious to me that anyone who is being that careful is hardly a born provocateur.*

Dan Clowes' interview in the Comics Journal*—the one where he said you were a Republican—came out shortly after that episode in Sushi on Bloor and that was when I developed my theory that the comic-book field can be divided into Sethites—people who think Chester Brown is an inherently perverse, unreasoning contrarian just for the sake of being contrary—and Simites—people who think Chester Brown is, if not* the *most sensible person we know, he is easily in the top three.*

As Kris, your ex-girlfriend says in "Helder" (The Little Man, p. 62) *"Chester doesn't play games. He's the most honest and straightforward person I know." (to which you, of course, added the caption "Take this with a grain of salt".) Definitely a Simite. Okay, anything*

you want to interject here—I'm particularly interested in the decision-making on the swearing scene—in the midst of my digression before I circle back to Riel-and-Scott and Riel-and-Schultz?

My original intention was to fully write out Scott's racist comments and profanity—*not* hide them with Xs I assumed that he was relatively unintelligent, so I tried writing dumb insults for him to taunt the Métis guards with. I wrote a bunch, but they didn't work —I had difficulty imagining the Metis guards getting upset about them. So then I wrote insults that I imagined would get *me* angry if I was a Métis, but to get the insults up to a level where they had some genuine "punch" required a certain amount of cleverness and most of them ended up being kinda funny. At least to me. Cleverness and a sense of humour are attractive qualities—I was afraid that, if I gave Scott clever and funny lines, he would "steal," not just the scenes he was in, but the whole book, and that everything after his execution would seem anticlimatic. "Who cares what happens to Louis Riel—he's not as roguishly charming as that witty, if somewhat politically incorrect, Thomas Scott" I'm sure that a really good writer could have come up with dumb, un-funny insults that never-the-less packed a hard enough punch to make the Metis reaction understandable, but I couldn't. The best solution to the problem seemed to be to leave the insults up the reader's imagination. And, of course, I was not unaware that taking that course of action would make the book more commercially acceptable. I would have made the *less* commercial choice if it had worked better, but this was an instance where the correct creative choice seemed to also be the more saleable one—at least given my limitations as a writer.

I don't know whether all that proves that I'm a contrarian or that I'm sensible

Sensible, I think. One of the problems is the dislocation of time, sensibility and culture. What would be offensive to a half-Indian, half-French individual in the 19th century in the hinterlands of North America would be very apt to seem so trifling to us today as to eliminate sympathy for the Métis' cause at a critical juncture in the story. On the one hand, it isn't difficult to picture the level of offensiveness, given that Scott was of an English (or, even "worse," Scots-Irish) background finding himself imprisoned by what he would have seen as his social and racial inferiors. On the other hand, 'sticks and stones may break my bones . .'

Again, I see the finger of God in this, playing on what I would see as overweening French and Indian pride (what a combination!). Again, giving Riel -as the incarnation of that dual-pride—the chance to prove himself in the crucible of human history. The French and the Indians were well on their way to national martyrdom by this point as Canada's Greatest Historical Victims with the air of aggrieved superiority that victim-status always implies. So, here on the cusp of the second chapter of the National Dream, the great push westward, here God gives the victims a chance to prove that they aren't just aggrieved, but that they are superior both as individuals and as nations to their white, English oppressors. Here at Fort Garry, Riel is given another chance to demonstrate godliness (for want of a better term). Having failed his test with Schultz and the forty-five followers holed up in Schultz's house (by ruling out any possibility of negotiation and making the extermination of the smaller force his first and only choice) God gives Riel the benefit of the doubt and gives him an even smaller and unarmed opposition by having the remnant of Schultz's force wander right into his hands.

Now, what will the Indian/French leader do, what compassion will he exhibit, what qualities of leadership will he embody?

And the answer, as far as I can see, is none

Granted, he does (or, as you indicate in your notes, a member of the provisional government does) intervene to save Scott from a lynch-mob of Métis guards, but Riel still falls prey... .'

(and I have to interrupt myself here to compliment you on the number of panels you devote to Riel thinking, thinking so hard that he looks as if his head might explode. He makes what are, to me, a series of wrong decisions, but it's not for any want of thinking it through. He knew, I think, exactly how important all of this was)

. to the loss of authority he can feel over-taking him ("Something has to be done. The guards are losing respect for you.") and sharing in the wounded vanity of his followers instead of rising above it. And he makes his second fatal error of charging Scott with treason, as he, himself, will later be charged with treason. And not only tries *Scott, but* court-martials *him, thus implying a purely military, state-centered concern and implying jurisdiction as well, just as Canada will claim jurisdiction over Riel and try him in a purely military, state-centered context. Again, he has determined his own fate Had he simply charged Scott with manslaughter of the Métis "spy"—it was definitely a crime of passion, completely unpremeditated, and the only actual crime that Scott could be convicted of in a civilized court—then he might have expected a more lenient interpretation of his own actions—fomenting public discord, as an example, instead of treason against Canada.*

And to top it all off, Scott doesn't speak French so he has no idea that he has just been sentenced to be shot to death the next day! Was any effort made to apprise Thomas Scott of the proceedings? That is, did he face a Stalinist-style "show trial" and execution or was there even a semblance of justice in providing him with an adequate defense and an interpreter?

It certainly seems to me to be a prerequisite of leadership that you have to endure any number of insults from your opposition. Just think of what God has had to put up with from his adversary and the followers of his adversary over millennia *and always with the Power to eradicate them in an eye-blink*

As far as I can see, Scott was executed for really offending the Métis with his insults. Else, why were all his fellow veterans of Schultz's short-lived rebellion

given complete amnesty? Shouldn't they all have been executed or shouldn't they all have been let go?

Flipping through the Riel books at hand, only two give detailed descriptions of the trial—Stanley's and Siggins'. They both agree on the essentials. Scott was not present while the witnesses were examined, and there was no one cross-examining on Scott's behalf Riel was Scott's translator, summarizing the evidence in English when Scott was finally brought in.

> *"It is not clear whether Scott asked to examine any of the witnesses or not, [Joseph] Nolin's memory on this point was defective and Nolin was the only eye-witness to give any details about the trial."* [Stanley, p.113]

Scott's trial wasn't quite as bad as a Stalin show-trial I do think that Scott might have been able to save himself if he'd been on-the-ball enough to give a really moving speech about the right to dissent or if he'd thrown himself on the mercy of the court and told them about his poor mother or something—there wasn't the remotest chance of such tactics working in the show-trials.

But I'm quibbling—the trial was very far from being fair. And I can't disagree with your last paragraph.

I have manfully tried to resist pointing out that both of your suggested courtroom tactics are emotion-based—a "really moving speech" about the right to dissent and telling them about his poor mother (his "poor mother"? What has his "poor mother" got to do with the price of rutabagas on Guam?)—and, as you can see, failed utterly. The fact that, as you say, such tactics wouldn't have worked in the Stalinist show-trials probably counts as the first thing I've ever heard enunciated in their favour

The anger that the Métis felt for Scott had blinded them to his humanity. Reminding them that there were people out there who cared about the man might have led them to contemplate the gravity of the situation and realize that killing someone because he's insulted you is maybe a bit of an over-reaction.

See, to me it's just compounding the problem. The problem is emotion-over-reason. It is inherently unjust, contrary to good judgment, to make literal life-and-death decisions on the basis of emotion. Only emotion-based beings would consider it sensible to kill someone because he insulted him (or her or them). Supplanting "you insulted us so we have to kill you" with "oh, you moved us to tears with your defense of your right to dissent so now we don't want to kill you anymore" or "oh, your mother moved us to tears with her love for you so now we don't want to kill you anymore" to me, that's just a textbook example of (foreshadowing our next subject) schizophrenia, the inability to distinguish between reality and fantasy. Likewise the "family values" underpinning of the whole "his poor mother" argument. Families don't have values. If you support your son and love your son no matter what he does, that is the exact opposite of a value, it is evidence of clinical insanity ("I want you to find out what those five girls did to upset my son so badly that he chopped them up with a fire axe") Which is a given with families, particularly with mothers, which is why such "ideas" shouldn't be allowed within a country mile of jurisprudence

In my opinion.

No, the way to keep emotion-based beings from perpetrating gross miscarriages of justice like that which was perpetrated against Thomas Scott isn't by escalating the level of emotional warfare, but by eliminating emotion from the proceedings: a) What did Scott do? b) what are the relevant laws? c) What is an appropriate punishment? Had sequential reasoning been the basis of the decision-making, they could never have voted to execute him

Okay, now I have *to ask you about the execution scene itself (in the sense that I do a dialogue like this both as a basis to discuss Large Issues and for purely selfish reader and fellow-creator curiosity reasons). Again, for the size of the total* Louis Riel *work itself, you devote very close to four pages to the execution scene: a lot of space, relatively speaking. What was the decision-making process like? Did it just land on the page like that? The only instance of full sentences in French, without translation (at least on the pages themselves) And the single white panel. Given the rest of the sequence, it couldn't be self-censorship or squeamishness. I want to hear all about it, Chet, everything you can remember*

I did several drawings of Scott getting shot and none of them looked right. I thought, "Well, I don't *have* to show Scott in the panel—maybe I can fill it with gunfire sound effects and draw the line of rifles shooting." But up to that point, I hadn't shown the line of executioners—focusing on Scott alone seemed to be working so I decided to not draw the line of rifles and to just leave the sound effects in the panel. It's a short step from having only sound effects in the panel to having nothing in the panel, but I can't remember how that short step occurred to me.

Why I used French in the scene is probably obvious—it's a small taste of how Scott is experiencing the moment—at least for the non-French-speaking part of my audience (which I assume is large). I don't remember how the idea came to me

As for why I'd spend four pages on it I was milking the drama

Nice milking job, Chet

I have to admit that the blank panel threw me the first time through but it seems more and more appropriate with subsequent re-readings It reminds me of a scene in a foreign film (Polanski's Repulsion *maybe?) not a bad effect to create in a scene where, as you say, anything that emphasizes Scott's own experience inside a completely alien context is all to the good*

Anything you want to add before we get to the religion and schizophrenia part of our program?

Nope—except to say that, while I don't know the

scene that you're referring to in *Repulsion*, I thought it was a terrific film—especially memorable was the use of ambient sound—the noises coming from the neighbourhood and the other apartments. Just about everything I've seen by Polanski, I've enjoyed.

And then there's that great moment—when Catherine Deneuve is closing the mirrored door and just for a split second she and the viewer see someone in the reflection behind her—which everyone has swiped by now so that it's become a suspense movie cliché.

Repulsion *is really just a guess on my part. It could be a Bergman film. Evidently when he was a student he discovered a reel of overexposed film in the trash, took it home and projected it and decided that this was the perfect archetype for a movie, pure white light. That was what he was struggling to achieve with* Persona, *a pure white light movie. Virtually no backgrounds. A motif Gerhard appreciated a great deal in the Konigsberg section of* Latter Days. *"More scenes from* Persona, *Dave." So a pure white panel might be more apt to be reminding me of a Bergman transition.*

We have about two pages left to go here in part one and I want to lead off part two with your "My Mom Was a Schizophrenic" strip and notes—before addressing Louis Riel's (possible) psychiatric profile in the course of the events you depict—so I'd like to lay a little groundwork, beforehand. In your earlier autobiographical strips, The Playboy *and* I Never Liked You, *your mother makes several brief appearances (which is only natural since you were still just a kid living at home in those stories). And she does seem a little...odd in what she says and how she chooses to say it. What age would your mother have been in those appearances and was that—again, for want of a better term—"oddness" always apparent to you?*

She was born in '23, so in 1970 (when "The Little Man" is set) she'd have been 47, and I'd have been 10. She was 53 when she died in '76.

The "odd" things that my mother said, and that later made it into *I Never Liked You*, weren't adding up to anything in my head at the time, and I'm not sure they should have. I don't see them as pointing toward a diagnosis of schizophrenia. That isn't to say that I wasn't beginning to think that my mother was odd—more than odd. When I was 14 or 15 I began to think she was going crazy again. But those fears weren't caused by anything that I showed in *I Never Liked You*. She would get hysterically over-emotional in arguments with my brother and me (mostly me) to a degree that seemed crazy. While I didn't show this in *I Never Liked You*, the type of fight that I show on pages 54 & 55 could have developed into one in which she went "crazy".

What seemed crazy to me at 14 or 15 doesn't seem all that crazy to me now as an adult—or if that sort of behaviour is crazy, it's a pretty common kind of craziness. A lot of adults can't handle arguments in close personal relationships—usually romantic or family ones—and emotionally flip out in them. At 14 or 15 I hadn't had any romantic relationships and the only family I was able to observe up-close was my own, and I could see that when my father was angry, he still managed to stay relatively rational. My only other examples of how adults in close personal relationships argued would have been on TV and in movies and adults there always argued rationally. I knew that kids, of course, threw temper tantrums—I'd done so myself—but I thought that adults were different. Helped along with the knowledge that my mother had been institutionalized in the past, I assumed she was going nuts.

You may be wondering why it took me 'til adolescence to notice my mother's tendency to flip out. My parents almost never fought. My father proclaimed when they got married that he wasn't going to fight with her. I can remember one occasion when a few sharp words were spoken (I wasn't in the room, so I don't know what it was about) and my mother retreated to their bedroom in tears, and that was it for arguments between the two of them that I witnessed. (And since I wasn't in the room when the angry words were spoken, I didn't even really witness it.) When my brother and I were young, any arguments with our mother would be settled quickly with a spanking. As my brother and I grew older, and spanking was no longer an option, and as we entered adolescence and began to want to express our independence and began to be able to verbalize at almost an adult level, clashes with my mother increased and I, more and more, saw her becoming hysterical.

To me, it's a gender thing. When I had my breakdown in '79—when I was diagnosed as a borderline schizophrenic—it scared my wife and she called my mother and my mother came over and both my wife and my mother proceeded to get scared and decided that I needed to get medical help (the court of first resort for most emotion-based beings).

Your mother was in the opposite situation, one female against three males. There is usually some peculiar negotiation that goes on in order to grease the wheels of a long-term relationship, like your Dad telling your mother he wasn't going to fight with her. At the courtship stage when the endorphins are still pounding through the system, it sounds like a wonderful thing. Oh, good. We're never going to fight. My father had, evidently, told my mother at the same endorphin stage that he didn't think he loved her but if she could live with that he wanted to marry her. Strategically cagey in both cases—particularly my father's strategy since my mother, as an emotion-based being, was bound to do everything to please him in order to make *him love her—but a recipe for disaster ultimately when "something's got to give".*

The definition of schizophrenia—the inability to perceive the difference between reality and fantasy—is, to me, self-evidently ludicrous because it presupposes that there is a universally agreed upon perception of what reality is. I see there as being a fundamental, primary, seminal schism between emotion-based feminine reality

and reason-based masculine reality—which your mother, I think, experienced: having her emotion-based feminine reality "outvoted" three-to-one by reason-based masculine reality. And then there's individualized reality which, to me, breaks down four ways into Reality, reality, "Reality" and "reality". You see this in marriages all the time. The husband and wife both experience the same events in their lives and on the news and yet they put those events into different categories. Common-law marriage, as an example, can be seen as a Reality by one partner (We. Are. Married) and as a "reality" by the other partner (We're sort of married, but not really). Although perceived as "reality" by him, if he knows what's good for him he'll keep it in the "Reality" column, sequestered from discussion or consideration in the interests, again, of "greasing the wheels". As we attempt to merge female oranges and male apples, society itself dissociates as emotion-based reality attempts to supersede reason-based reality. As you say in "My Mom Was a Schizophrenic," in 1973 the American Psychiatric Association took a vote and decided homosexuality wasn't a mental illness anymore. I laugh out loud every time I come to that caption. I mean, to me, it's just funny to vote on reality. 5,854 to 3,810 you cite Paula J. Caplan as reporting as the vote in They Say You're Crazy *(Addison-Wesley, 1995). But, doesn't that, therefore, mean that in 1973 there were 3,810 schizophrenic psychiatrists who were unable to perceive reality accurately, unable to perceive that homosexuality was not a mental illness and were so seriously deluded that they voted that it was one? Shouldn't their credentials be called into question? Shouldn't they face rigorous psychiatric examinations before they're allowed to treat any more patients? But, instead, I would be viewed as the schizophrenic, laughing at people taking a vote on whether homosexuality is a mental illness. My laughter would be seen as delusional and "inappropriate." All the more so when the courts are being used to determine the nature of reality. What is marriage? What is a wife? What is a husband? Emotion-based beings have determined that if they can take over the Supreme Court—as they've pretty much done in Canada—they get to define reality. The half of the population who see gay marriage as legitimate are sane and the half that see gay marriage as illegitimate are insane. The half of the population who see abortion as murder are insane and the half who see abortion as a human right are sane.*

Your turn, again.

How did I know you were going to see it as a gender thing? Having met rational women and overly-emotional men, I fail to find convincing your contention that women are emotion-based and men are reason-based. You're right that there isn't a universally agreed on perception of what reality is and that there's a clash of views-of-reality going on, but I don't see that clash divided between emotion-based beings and reason-based beings. I think the division is between *everyone.* I think that, if we were able to somehow create a society that was completely made up of Sim-approved reason-based humans, there would still be people in that society who would seem crazy to the majority.

By the way, I definitely don't see your opinions on gender matters as valueless—I agree with a lot of what you've written on the subject. As I've told you in person, *Cerebus* #186 did push me in the direction of questioning the whole romantic relationship thing. Marriage and boyfriend-girlfriend relationships, at least at this point in history, don't look very sensible to me. We agree in large part on the current state of gender relations—it's the root causes that we disagree on.

We're either in danger here of swerving very far from our subject, schizophrenia, or we're getting right to the heart of it.

I would maintain that you've agreed with me, personally and individually, because you know that gender relations today implicitly consist of men having to choose between the rock of capitulating to lunatic viewpoints or the hard place of spending most of their waking hours arguing about them but that you are afraid to agree with me in a general way because you don't want to seem like a misogynist.

Like the time you and Joe and I were walking down College Street—in no danger of becoming the new Queen Street in my books unless they can increase exponentially their population of astonishingly beautiful teenaged girls—and I stopped to give a decrepit old street guy twenty bucks. And when I caught up to you and Joe you said, with anecdotal ferocity, "Don't you think that Diana Schutz is more intelligent than that guy?" And, as I said to you then, my experience with so-called intelligent women—and Diana Schutz was no exception—is that they aren't so much intelligent as...and then I was at a loss for a term and I think what I came up with was "cunning". In the feral sense. Virtually all of my conversations with Diana Schutz and all the other women I've known who are considered intelligent, consisted of her trying to convince me that men and women are equal. And to me, that's a lunatic idea and the degree of your lunacy can directly be determined by the extent to which you are absorbed a) in believing it b) in trying to convince others of it and c) ostracizing anyone who refuses to capitulate to your insanity.

In my personal experience, Chet, you are the only person beside myself not actively engaged in those three occupations. It may be an insurmountable step from "I don't, personally, see any clothes on the Empress" to "The Empress is naked," but at least you're closer to accurately perceiving reality than anyone else I know.

Sorry to disillusion you, Dave, but the proposition that men and women are equal doesn't seem like a lunatic idea to me. Of course, it depends on what you mean by equal. In terms of physical strength, sure, there's inequality. There may be individual women who could beat me up, but the average man is physically stronger than the average woman. I don't have a copy of *The Guinness Book of World Records,* but I'm confi-

dent that the person who can currently lift the most amount of weight is a man and has been a man for every edition of that fine publication. But, in the intellectual realm, I see no reason to assume that women are inferior to men. Intellectual strength isn't as easy to measure as physical strength—I don't see IQ tests as accurate gauges, and that just leaves us with individual perception. Some of the women I meet *seem* intelligent to me, and some them *seem* dumb. And some of the men I meet *seem* intelligent and some of them *seem* dumb. It may be that a cultural bias has affected my perceptions, but it *seems* to me that the two genders come out about even. That's not going to sound like convincing proof to you, and that's okay—I know that trying to convince you on this point is futile. I'm just stating my position.

If I don't think that arguing about or capitulating to "lunatic viewpoints" is the source of the problem, then what is? Here's my quick, simplified overview of the situation:

At one time marriages were held together by a social network of community, family and religious ties. Those ties have loosened in the industrialized world in the last few centuries, and they got really loose in the 20th century. With the rise of the romantic novel in the late 18th century and the increase in literacy in the 19th, love came to be seen as more and more important in marriage and in quasi-marriage (boyfriend-girlfriend relationships). Love is now the reason why people enter into marriages/quasi-marriages and—as those above-mentioned social ties have loosened—love is expected to be the tie that will keep such relationships together. The problem is that love (being just an emotion) is ephemeral—here today, gone tomorrow—and therefore a very weak tie and a weak guarantee of happiness. Also, we've grown up in a media-saturated culture where the dominant story being constantly broadcast at us is one of idealized eternal-love, and that's had an effect on what we expect in those marriages/quasi-marriages. And when neither person can live up to those expectations, tension and fighting are inevitable. Some couples accommodate themselves to lowered expectations better than others, but I doubt that what happens in most marriages/quasi-marriages lives up to what the couple had hoped would happen when they first fell in love.

Men and women have to learn a different way of relating to one another. In the meantime, the whole marriage/quasi-marriage game looks very "un-fun" to me, and I have no interest in playing along.

Yes, I know that trying to convince you on this point is futile as well. If women were willing to forego alimony and all manner of affirmative action (university enrollment quotas being a great place to start) then I think we would have evidence supporting your view of gender equality.

I do agree with you that the rise of the romance novel is one of the sources of our present trouble. When a girl is allowed to follow her heart, nine times out of ten she will end up entangled with a fellow who, in a previous century, her father would have forbidden her to have any interaction with (and who he would have had horsewhipped if he set foot on the property). And, in a like fashion, when a man is allowed to follow his dick, he ends up entangled with women who, in a previous century, his father would have forbidden him to have any public *interaction with. Joseph Kennedy spent a lot of money buying off gold-digging tramps that he saw as jeopardizing his son's advancement (the few that JFK was in danger of falling in love with—Inge Arvad, the Nazi spy as an example—being the most expensive). The wiser course of action, of course, is to teach morality, but with a "lodestone hunk" and an "anything goes" society that only goes so far. Jackie obviously taught her son, to the extent it was possible, to be the opposite of JFK when it came to women, but that just made him an easy mark for a garden-variety, social-climbing tramp like Caroline Bisset.*

This, to me, is society-wide schizophrenia: The reality of what men (who are the most desirable to women) usually are and the reality of what women (who are the most desirable to men) usually are. Put another way, now that I know that what I want isn't good for me and assuming that what is good for me isn't what I want, I see myself as permanently on the sidelines, quasi-marriage-wise.

Some women *are* willing to forego alimony. When my friend Kris divorced her first husband, she didn't ask for anything—and, believe me, she could have used the money.

I share your opposition to things like affirmative action programs, but I'm not in any position to call into question the intellectual capabilities of people who take advantage of such programs, having personally accepted money from a government-run arts funding agencythat I don't think should exist. (*Chet applied for a got a grant from the federal Canada Council of the Arts to complete* Louis Riel.) Seth, being a typical Canadian leftist, teases me about that a lot.

Nor did Deni, nor did Diana Schutz when she and Bob Schreck divorced. My point, however, isn't anecdotal, its that equality can't exist until females as a gender remove alimony from the law. Either that or make alimony voluntary on both sides of the equation both in terms of how much is paid and whether or not it is paid.

I have to admit that I was torn when I heard about your grant—on the one hand disappointed that you had compromised your principles and on the other hand floored by the fact that the Canada Council finally gave a grant to a comic book! Jim Waley with ORB magazine, *me, Gene Day with Shadow Press. We all got shot down repeatedly back in the 70s. The Council's policy was that comic books were commercial and Real Art wasn't commercial. Looking at what they've been funding for the last thirty years, I have to go along with them on that. At least* Louis Riel *I can understand.*

Next issue: More schizophrenia and some old time religion.

COMICS REVUE

#200

$7.95

MORE THAN 60 PAGES OF YO RI STRIPS

LOUIS RIEL & CEREBUS

Salute
Comics Revue's
200TH
ISSUE!